

BETWEEN TWO YEARS

REV. DR. TALMAGE PREACHES ELOQUENTLY ON SHORTENED LIVES.

Too Much Time Spent in a Panegyric of Longevity—The Temptations of Success, Compensations of Death—The Worth of a Clear Conscience.

BROOKLYN, Dec. 31.—In the forenoon service at the Brooklyn Tabernacle to-day, Rev. Dr. Talmage preached on the subject of "Shortened Lives; or, A Cheerful Goodby to 1893."

We have written for the last time at the head of our letters and business documents the figures 1893. With this day closes the year. In January last we celebrated its birth. Today we attend its obsequies.

Another 12 months have been cut out of our earthly continuance, and it is a time for absorbing reflection. We all spend much time in panegyric of longevity. We consider it a great thing to live to be an octogenarian.

If any one dies in youth, we say, "What a pity!" Dr. Muhlenberg in old age said that the hymn written in early life by his own hand no more expressed his sentiment when it said,

I would not live away. If one be pleasantly circumstanced, he never wants to go. William Cullen Bryant, the great poet, at 82 years of age, standing in my house in a festal gown reading "Thanatopsis" without spectacles, was just as anxious to live as when at 18 years of age he wrote the immortal threnody. Cato feared at 80 years of age that he would not live to learn Greek.

Monaldesco at 115 years, writing the history of his time, feared a collapse. Theophrastus writing a book at 90 years of age was anxious to live to complete it. Thurlow Weed at about 88 years of age found life as great a desideratum as when he snuffed out his first politician.

Albert Barnes, so well prepared for the next world, at 70 said he would rather stay here. So it is all the way down. I suppose that the last time Methuselah was out of doors in a storm he was afraid of getting his feet wet lest it shorten his days.

Indeed I some time ago preached a sermon on the blessings of longevity, but in this, the last day of 1893, and when many are filled with sadness at the thought that another chapter of their life is closing, and that they have 365 days less to live, I propose to preach to you about the advantages of an abbreviated earthly existence.

INDUSTRY INCULCATED. If I were an agnostic, I would say a man is blessed in proportion to the number of years he can stay on "terra firma," because after that he falls off the decks, and if he is ever picked out of the depths it is only to be set up in some morgue of the universe to see if anybody will claim him.

If I thought God made man only to last 40 or 50 or 100 years, and then he was to go into annihilation, I would say his chief business ought to be to keep alive and even in good weather to be very cautious, and to carry an umbrella and take overcoats and life preservers and bronze armor and weapons of defense lest he fall off into nothingness and obliteration.

But, my friends, you are not agnostics. You believe in immortality and the eternal residence of the righteous in heaven, and therefore I first remark that an abbreviated earthly existence is to be desired, and is a blessing because it makes one's life work very compact.

Some men go to business at 7 o'clock in the morning and return at 7 in the evening. Others go at 8 o'clock and return at 12. Others go at 10 and return at 4. I have friends who are ten hours a day in business, others who are five hours, others who are one hour. They all do their work well—they do their entire work, and then they return. Which position do you think the most desirable?

You say, other things being equal, the man who is the shortest time detained in business and who can return home the quickest is the most blessed.

Now, my friends, why not carry that good sense into the subject of transference from this world? If a person die in childhood, he gets through his work at 9 o'clock in the morning. If he die at 40 years of age, he gets through his work at 12 o'clock noon. If he die at 70 years of age, he gets through his work at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. If he die at 90, he has to toil all the way up to 11 o'clock at night.

The sooner we get through our work the better. The harvest all in harrack or barn, the farmer does not sit down in the stubble field, but, shouldering his scythe and taking his pitcher from under a tree, he makes a straight line for the old homestead. All we want to be anxious about is to get our work done and well done; the quicker the better.

Again, there is a blessing in an abbreviated earthly existence in the fact that moral disaster might come upon the man if he tarried longer. A man who had been prominent in churches, and who had been admired for his generosity and kindness everywhere, for forgery was sent to state prison for 15 years. Twenty years before there was no more probability that man's committing a commercial dishonesty than that you will commit commercial dishonesty.

The number of men who fall into ruin between 50 and 70 years of age is simply appalling. If they had died 50 years before, it would have been better for them and better for their families. The shorter the voyage the less chance for a cyclone.

PERILS OF SUCCESS. There is a wrong theory abroad that if one's youth be right, his old age will be right. You might as well say there is nothing wanting for a ship's safety except to get it fully launched on the Atlantic ocean. I have sometimes asked those who were schoolmates or college mates of some great defrauder: "What kind of a boy was he? What kind of a young man was he?" and they have said: "Why, he was a splendid fellow. I had a good deal to do with him."

tion of life sometimes comes far on in midlife or in old age. The first time I crossed the Atlantic ocean it was as smooth as a millpond, and I thought the sea captains and the voyagers had slandered the old ocean, and I wrote home an essay for a magazine on "The Smile of the Sea," but I never afterward could have written that thing, for before we got home we got a terrible shaking up. The first voyage of life may be very smooth; the last may be a euroclydon. Many who start life in great prosperity do not end it in prosperity.

The great pressure of temptation comes sometimes in this direction: At about 45 years of age a man's nervous system changes, and some one tells him he must take stimulants to keep himself up, and he takes stimulants to keep himself up until the stimulants keep him down, or a man has been going along for 30 or 40 years in unsuccessfull business, and here is an opening where by one dishonorable action he can lift himself and lift his family from all financial embarrassment. He attempts to leap the chasm, and he falls into it.

Then it is in after life that the great temptation of success comes. If a man make a fortune before 30 years of age, he generally loses it before 40. The solid and the permanent fortunes for the most part do not come to their climax until middle or in old age. The most of the bank presidents have white hair.

Many of those who have been largely successful have been full of arrogance or worldliness or dissipation in old age. They may not have lost their integrity, but they have become so worldly and so selfish under the influence of large success that it is evident to everybody that their success has been a temporal calamity and an eternal damage.

Concerning many people it may be said it seems as if it would have been better if they could have embarked on this life at 20 or 30 years of age. Do you know the reason why the vast majority of people die before 85? It is because they have not the moral endurance for that which is beyond the 30 and a merciful God will not allow them to be put to the fearful strain.

Again, there is a blessing in an abbreviated earthly existence in the fact that one is the sooner taken off the defensive. As soon as one is old enough to take care of himself, he is put on his guard. Bolts on the door to keep out the robbers. Fireproof safes to keep off the flames. Life insurance and fire insurance against accidents. Receipts lest you have to pay a debt twice. Lifeboat against shipwreck. Westinghouse air brake against railroad collision.

There are many ready to overreach you and take all you have. Defense against cold, defense against heat, defense against sickness, defense against the world's abuse, defense all the way down to the grave, and even the tombstone sometimes is not a sufficient barricade.

If a soldier who has been on guard, shivering and stung with the cold, pacing up and down the parapet with shouldered musket, is glad when some one comes to relieve guard and he can go inside the fortress, ought not that man to shout for joy who can put down his weapon of earthly defense and go into the king's castle? Who is the more fortunate, the soldier who has to stand guard 12 hours, or the man who has to stand guard six hours? We have common sense about everything but religion, common sense about everything but transference from this world.

THE EVIL TO COME. Again, there is a blessing in an abbreviated earthly existence in the fact that one escapes so many bereavements. The longer we live the more attachments and the more kindred, the more chords to be wounded or rasped or sunnered. If a man live on to 70 or 80 years of age, how many graves are cleft at his feet? In that long reach of time father and mother go, brothers and sisters go, children go, grandchildren go, personal friends outside the family circle whom they had loved with a love like that of David and Jonathan.

Besides that, some men have a natural repugnance about dissolution, and ever and anon during 40 or 50 or 60 years this horror of their dissolution shudders through soul and body. Now, suppose the lad goes at 15 years of age. He escapes 50 funerals, 50 caskets, 50 obsequies, 50 awful wrenchings of the heart. It is hard enough for us to bear their departure, but is it not easier for us to bear their departure than for them to stay and bear 50 departures? Shall we not, by the grace of God, rouse ourselves into a generosity of bereavement which will practically say, "It is hard enough for me to go through this bereavement, but how glad I am that he will never have to go through it!"

So I reason with myself, and so you will find it helpful to reason with yourselves. David lost his son. Though David was king, he lay on the earth mourning and inconsolable for some time. At this distance of time, which do you really think was the one to be congratulated, the short lived child or the long lived father? Had David died as early as that child died, he would in the first place have escaped that particular bereavement, then he would have escaped the worse bereavement of Absalom, his recreant son, and the pursuit of the Philistines, and the fatigues of his military campaign, and the jealousy of Saul, and the perfidy of Abithophel, and the curse of Shimei, and the destruction of his family at Ziklag, and, above all, he would have escaped the two great calamities of his life, the great sin of uncleanliness and murder. David lived to be of vast use to the church and the world, but so far as his own happiness was concerned, does it not seem to you that it would have been better for him to have gone early?

Now, this, my friends, explains some things that you have been inexplicable. This shows you why when God takes little children from a household he is very apt to take the brightest, the most talented, the most sympathetic, the most generous. Why? It is because that kind of nature suffers the most when it does suffer and is most liable to temptation. God saw the tempter sweeping

up from the Caribbean, and he put the delicate craft into the first harbor. "Taken away from the evil to come." Again, my friends, there is a blessing in an abbreviated earthly existence in the fact that it puts one sooner in the center of things. All astronomers, infidel as well as Christian, agree in believing that the universe swings around some great center. Any one who has studied the earth and studied the heavens knows that God's favorite figure in geometry is a circle. When God put forth his hand to create the universe, he did not strike that hand at right angles, but he waved it in a circle and kept on waving it in a circle until systems and constellations and galaxies and all worlds took that motion. Our planet swinging around the sun, other planets swinging around other suns, but somewhere a great hub around which the great wheel of the universe turns. Now, that wheel is heaven. That is the capital of the universe. That is the great metropolis of immensity.

KNOWLEDGE AT FIRST HANDS. Now, does not our common sense teach us that in matters of study it is better for us to move out from the center toward the circumference rather than to be on the circumference, where our world now is? We are like those who study the American continent while standing on the Atlantic beach. The way to study the continent is to cross it or go to the heart of it. Our standpoint in this world is defective. We are at the wrong end of the telescope. The best way to study a piece of machinery is not to stand on the doorstep and try to look in, but to go in with the engineer and take our place right amid the saws and the cylinders. We wear our eyes out and our brain out from the fact that we are studying under such great disadvantage.

Millions of dollars for observatories to study things about the moon, about the sun, about the rings of Saturn, about transits and occultations and eclipses, simply because our studio, our observatory, is poorly situated. We are down in the cellar trying to study the palace of the universe, while our departed Christian friends have gone up stairs amid the skylights to study.

Now, when one can sooner get to the center of things, is he not to be congratulated? Who wants to be always in the freshman class? We study God in this world by the Biblical photograph of him, but we all know we can in five minutes of interview with a friend get more accurate ideas of him than we can by studying him 50 years through pictures of words. The little child that died last night today knows more of God than all Andover, and all Princeton, and all New Brunswick, and all Edinburgh, and all the theological institutions in Christendom. Is it not better to go up to the very headquarters of knowledge?

Does not our common sense teach us that it is better to be at the center than to be clear out on the rim of the wheel, holding nervously fast to the tire lest we be suddenly hurled into light and eternal felicity? Through all kinds of optical instruments trying to peer in through the cracks and the keyholes of heaven—afraid that both doors of the celestial mansion will be swung wide open before our entranced vision—rushing about among the apothecary shops of this world, wondering if this is good for rheumatism, and that is good for neuralgia and something else is good for a bad cough, lest we be suddenly ushered into a land of everlasting health, where the inhabitant never says, "I am sick."

What fools we all are to prefer the circumference to the center! What a dreadful thing it would be if we should be suddenly ushered from this wintry world into the Maytime orchards of heaven, and if our pauperism of sin and sorrow should be suddenly broken up by a presentation of an emperor's castle, surrounded by parks with springing fountains and paths up and down which angels of God walk two and two!

We stick to the world as though we preferred cold drizzle to warm habitation, discord to cantata, sackcloth to royal purple—as though we preferred a piano with four or five keys out of tune to an instrument fully attuned— as though earth and heaven had exchanged apparel and earth had taken on bridal array and heaven had gone into deep mourning, all its waters stagnant, all its harps broken, all chalicers cracked at the dry wells, all the lawns sloping to the river plowed with graves, with dead angels under the furrow. Oh, I want to break up my own infatuation, and I want to break up your infatuation for this world. I tell you if we are ready, and if our work is done, the sooner we go the better, and if there are blessings in longevity, I want you to know right well there are also blessings in an abbreviated earthly existence.

A FORTUNATE ESCAPE. If the spirit of this sermon is true, how consoled you ought to feel about members of your families that went early. "Taken from the evil to come," this book says. What a fortunate escape they had! How glad we ought to feel that they will never have to go through the struggles which we have had to go through. They had just time enough to get out of the cradle and run up the springtime hills of this world and see how it looked, and then they started for a better stopping place. They were like ships that put in at St. Helena, staying there long enough to let passengers go up and see the barracks of Napoleon's captivity and then hoist sail for the port of their own native land. They only took their world "in transitu." It is hard for us, but it is blessed for them.

And if the spirit of this sermon is true, then we ought not to go around sighing and groaning because another year has gone. But we ought to go down on our knees by the milestones and see the letters and thank God that we are 365 miles nearer home. We ought not to go around with morbid feelings about our health or about anticipated demise. We ought to be living, not according to that old maxim which I used to hear in my boyhood, that you must live as though every day were the last; you must live as though you were to live forever, for you will. Do not be nervous lest you have to move out of a shanty into an Albanian

One Christmas morning one of my neighbors, an old sea captain, died. After life had departed, his face was illuminated as though he were just going in to harbor. The fact was, he had already got through the "Narrowes." In the adjoining room were the Christmas presents waiting for his distribution. Long ago, one night, when he had narrowly escaped with his ship from being run down by a great ocean steamer, he had made his peace with God, and a kinder neighbor or a better man you would not find this side of heaven. Without a moment's warning the pilot of the heavenly harbor had met him just off the lightskip.

The captain often talked to me of the goodness of God, and especially of a time when he was about to go in New York harbor with his ship from Liverpool, and he was suddenly impressed that he ought to put back to sea. Under the protest of the crew and under their very threat, he put back to sea, fearing at the same time he was losing his mind, for it did seem so unreasonable that when they could get into harbor that night they should put back to sea. But they put back to sea, and the captain said to his mate, "You will call me at 10 o'clock at night."

At 12 o'clock at night the captain was aroused and said: "What does this mean? I thought I told you to call me at 10 o'clock, and here it is 12." "Why," said the mate, "I did call you at 10 o'clock, and you got up, looked around and told me to keep right on this same course for two hours, and then to call you at 12 o'clock." Said the captain: "Is it possible? I have no remembrance of that."

At 13 o'clock the captain went on deck, and through the rift of the cloud the moonlight fell upon the sea and showed him a shipwreck with 100 struggling passengers. He helped them off. Had he been any earlier or any later at that point of the sea he would have been of no service to those drowning people. On board the captain's vessel they began to band together as to what they should pay for the provisions. "Ah," says the captain, "my lady, you can't pay me anything. All I have on board is yours. I feel too greatly honored of God in having saved you to take any pay." Just like him. He never got any pay except that of his own applauding conscience.

Oh, that the old sea captain's God might be my God and yours. Amid the stormy seas of this life may we have always some one as tenderly to take care of us as the captain took care of the drowning crew and the passengers. And may we come into the harbor with as little physical pain and with as bright a hope as he had, and if it should happen to be a Christmas morning when the presents are being distributed and we are celebrating the birth of him who came to save our shipwrecked world, all the better, for what grander, brighter Christmas present could we have than heaven?

General G. O. Howard, commander of the eastern division of the United States army, is a frequent attendant at the Young Men's Christian association meetings in New York. He is one of the most noted Christian workers in the United States army.

One of the best long distance rifle shots in the world is L. E. Danuser of Independence, Wis. He won several prizes at the Columbian shooting match that was held at Pullman, near Chicago. Mr. Danuser says that Americans need not fear Europeans as marksmen, but rather Canadians.

Albert Edward's Yacht. The Prince of Wales' cutter Britannia, which is laid up for the winter at Cowes, has had her copper stripped off and will be smoothed down and recoppered before the commencement of next season. Her racing during the past summer has certainly been most successful, and she easily heads the list of winning yachts, having won no less than £1,573 in money prizes, and in addition became the holder of the Royal Alfred Challenge cup, the German Emperor's Challenge shield, the Royal Victoria Gold Challenge cup and the Cape May cup.—London Telegraph.

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Florists' Decorations. There has within the past year or so grown up a great rivalry between the florists of upper Broadway, and the public has been the gainer, inasmuch as the display made by the florists is far more attractive from the street than ever before. The shops have been beautified, their show windows enlarged and the utmost efforts put forth to make an effective display that will attract attention from the passerby. This is generally done by the artistic grouping of masses of superb flowers together against a background of greens or by providing something out of the common in contrast effects. One florist created a decided sensation lately by having a windmill in his window, the arms of which revolved and blazed alternately red and white as dozens of tiny electric lamps of glass of those colors were thrown on or off an electric circuit. At the back of the shop, but in full view of the street, stood an immense peacock of metal, colored to nature, and its tail illuminated by a great many similar tiny lamps set in the "eyes" on the feathers.—New York Mail and Express.

In 1873 a check bank was opened for business in London. It suited the use of persons not having a bank deposit elsewhere, and issued checks for small amounts in order to insure greater safety in transmitting funds by mail and otherwise.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

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